

see what is really a slow strangulation of the culture and of the traditional religion as the state attempts to rewrite religion without the support of the religious leaders, and thus come down hard on those religious leaders and try to remove them from society and try to imprison them certainly when they speak out.

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As Human Rights Watch said, this is the worst crackdown that we have seen in Vietnam in 20 years. In the past year, Vietnamese officials brought this harassment to religious leaders and political dissidents and student activists to these new draconian levels that, unfortunately, force us to act here.

This bill's focus on Vietnam suppression of the democratic movement and its tight control over the media will be an important component in bringing change. Why? Because with this legislation, Radio Free Asia will now better be able to bring objective news and to be a surrogate voice for opinions and news outside of the state-sponsored propaganda, so the Vietnamese people will hear of the spread of democratic values in Asia.

Frankly, the spread of democratic values in Asia is critical to U.S. security interests. It is important to note that Vietnam has recently ratcheted up its efforts to block radio broadcasts from Radio Free Asia. This tells me that not only are these broadcasts having a positive effect in combating state propaganda, but Hanoi is feeling increased political pressure. This bill provides the means to overcome radio jamming and the funds for continued broadcasts.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill. I think it sends a firm message to Hanoi that abuse of this kind to nonviolent citizens in the country will not be met with silence, but, frankly, that we will take action not only in terms of the broadcasting, but this also authorizes our administration to provide U.S. assistance through appropriate nongovernmental organizations and the Human Rights Defenders Fund for the support of the individuals and organizations to promote human rights and to promote nonviolent democratic change inside the country.

So besides capping U.S. nonhumanitarian assistance, this other leverage will be very helpful in terms of trying to protect the human rights and dignity of the students and of the religious leaders right now that are facing such persecution inside Vietnam.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues from California, Mr. ROYCE and Ms. SANCHEZ, for their most outstanding statements and their support of this proposed legislation offered by my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey.

It saddens me because of the times and the periods that I have had the op-

portunity of meeting with several delegations that have represented Vietnam for the past couple of years. As my good friend from New Jersey has stated earlier, they have made a lot of promises. We have taken their promises in good faith, and now we find ourselves in a situation where their promises have been severely questioned. I kind of like to think that when a country makes a promise, they like to keep it. If this is the way Vietnam is doing business, then certainly we ought to do something about it.

Again, I want to thank my good friend from New Jersey for his authorship of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, before yielding back the balance of our time, again, I want to thank Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA and just remind my colleagues that this is the third time this legislation, both under the Republican leadership, and now, thankfully, the Speaker has seen fit to bring this to the floor, as well, the third time I have brought this bill to the floor. Twice it passed the House. Hopefully, it will pass it again.

I think there is a greater sense of urgency now because there is this new, and I would call it an ugly and pervasive, crackdown. They got all their economic benefits. They got their World Trade Organization accession, and, as I said before, PNTR was passed by this House and the bilateral agreement before that. So they got all of that. Now, they just have gone right back to the ugliest commissions of crimes against their own people.

Mr. Speaker, let me just also say to my colleagues that we have heard from some very reliable sources that those who have been incarcerated, those who are being intimidated are being told that the United States really doesn't care about human rights; that all that we care about is the almighty buck, the dollar, and making profits. I want to remind them that we have not walked away. This is a bipartisan expression of concern for their well-being.

Of course, we know why they do this. I will never forget Wei Jingsheng, the great human rights Democracy Wall leader, who spent years in the Chinese laogai, or gulag, coming and testifying at a hearing that I convened on human rights abuses in China. He said that one of the ways that they break people in prison is to say that nobody cares and that everybody has forgotten. It says in the Bible that without hope, the people perish. And that is I think doubly, triply true when you are an incarcerated political prisoner and you are told that you have been abandoned.

I want those individuals to know we have not abandoned them. We care deeply for them. We pray for them; and we are trying to do what we can do, using legislation to try to effectuate their release and hopefully, some day, welcome a Vietnam that is democratic,

free, and a protector of human rights, not a violator.

Mr. Speaker, let me also finally say that right after we passed this legislation out of committee in the International Relations Committee in a totally bipartisan effort, the Communist Party of Vietnam's online newspaper berated me and my colleagues very, very, I think, viciously. They did what all human rights abusers always do. They said, Don't interfere with our internal affairs.

Well, we have heard that before, Mr. Speaker. We have heard it from the Soviet Union. We have heard it from Cuba. We have heard it from countries where gulags are filled with human rights activists and freedom-loving individuals. We heard it from South Africa in the 1980s when many of us spoke out passionately against apartheid. They said, Don't intervene in our internal affairs.

I hope the Senate takes note. I hope my colleagues will read what is truly going on in Vietnam today. I have put this in the RECORD, the 8406 Manifesto, a great statement of human rights call, and will include as the judge's findings in the sentencing of the two people, including Dai that I mentioned earlier. You read this and you realize why we get so concerned, those of us like Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA and others who follow this day in and day out. This is an indictment on the system, not on the individuals who have been sent to prison.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to read this. I urge passage of this bill.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3096, the Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2007, introduced by my distinguished colleague, Mr. SMITH. This important legislation provides economic and political incentives for the Vietnamese government to improve its human rights record and ensure freedom and democracy. This bill also encourages the dissemination of information to the people of Vietnam through promoting free media and encouraging educational exchanges with the United States that will allow for a true democracy of truth and knowledge develop.

Mr. Speaker, despite a recent history of warfare and an oppressive command economy, Vietnam is now making extraordinary progress. Last year, Vietnam's economy grew by over 8 percent, and it hosted the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit. In January 2007, Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization.

This rapid economic progress has improved the lives of millions of Vietnamese. However, I remain concerned about the lack of political openness and reported human rights abuses. In this repressive atmosphere, the government arrests individuals who are peacefully advocating democracy as well as limiting the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of information.

Vietnam today is at a crossroads, the government must now choose to accept its responsibilities to its citizens or continue upon its trajectory of shunning them, facing increasing international scrutiny. The United States and the Congress must react to the situation in Vietnam with firmness and resolve; we are